

**VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE
1642 STATE FARM BLVD
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22911**

MEDICAL-LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

No one wants an athlete to be injured. In sports activities, however, there is always the possibility of injury no matter how careful we are in observing proper procedures. In like manner, no one wants to be involved in a law suit. Today we have an unprecedented number of sports-related litigation that concerns everyone associated with sports.

The fact that injury occurs does not necessarily mean that the coach is negligent or liable for damages. There are no sure criteria for determining what is negligent action since each case stands individually on its own merit. The following recommendations can help prevent situations that may lead to injuries or litigation.

- 1. Require a thorough physical examination before the athlete engages in the sport.*
- 2. Access the VHSL recommended Fall Practice Guidelines – click here> <http://www.vhsl.org/files/smac-fall-practice-guidelines.pdf> .*
- 3. Assign someone to make certain all equipment fits properly.*
- 4. Assign someone to inspect equipment for defects and the facilities for hazards. Keep an accurate record of the inspection.*
- 5. Obtain medical insurance coverage for the athletic and liability insurance for the coaches and other staff members.*
- 6. Adopt a medical plan for emergency treatment for all athletes involved in physical contact or exercise.*
- 7. Assign drills within the athlete's range of ability and commensurate with his size, skill and physical drills.*
- 8. Prepare the athlete gradually for all physical drills and progress from simple to complex tasks in strenuous and dangerous drills.*
- 9. Warn the athlete of all possible dangers inherent in the drills in which he is involved.*
- 10. Follow the activities as designed. If the coach deviates from the prescribed drills, the decision to do so should be based on sound reasoning. Extra precautions for safety should be taken.*
- 11. Adopt a policy regarding injuries. Do not attempt to be a "medical specialist" in judging the physical condition of an athlete under your care.*
- 12. Require a physician's medical permission before permitting serious injured or ill athletes to return to normal practice.*
- 13. Avoid moving the injured athlete until it is safe to do so. Whenever the athlete is moved, make certain he is taken away from potentially dangerous playing areas.*
- 14. Conduct periodic medical - legal in-service training programs for all personnel.*